

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Wednesday, 14 November 2012 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at Time Not Specified

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Michael Waine – in the Chair
Councillor Marilyn Badcock (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor M. Altaf-Khan
Councillor Ann Bonner
Councillor Mrs Anda Fitzgerald-O'Connor
Councillor Pete Handley
Councillor Caroline Newton
Councillor Neil Owen
Councillor Zoe Patrick
Councillor Dave Sexon
Councillor Val Smith

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor Melinda Tilley

Co-opted Members: Mr Chris Bevan
Mrs Sue Matthew

By Invitation:

Officers: Lisa Michelson, Alison Partridge, Jim Leivers, Frances Craven, Mike Bardsley, Vicky Field, Karen Hopwood, Matthew Edwards, Teresa Rogers, Adrian Chant

Whole of meeting

Part of meeting

Agenda Item Officer Attending

The Scrutiny Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting [, together with a schedule of addenda tabled at the meeting/the following additional documents:] and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda and reports [agenda, reports and schedule/additional documents] are attached to the signed Minutes.

226/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 1)

Apologies were received from Carole Thomson and Bob Martyn. Councillor Zoe Patrick substituted for Councillor Janet Godden.

227/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE ON THE BACK PAGE

(Agenda No. 2)

None.

228/12 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 3)

The committee approved the minutes.

229/12 SPEAKING TO OR PETITIONING THE COMMITTEE

(Agenda No. 4)

None.

230/12 FORWARD PLAN

(Agenda No. 5)

The committee expressed the concern that whilst it was clear that a lot of work had taken place surrounding academies, there was a lack of a complete picture.

231/12 COMMITTEE BUSINESS

(Agenda No. 6)

Early Intervention Hubs report:

Cllr Patrick noted that she was pleased to see that this work has happened and will keep watching and waiting as there is a mixed picture at the moment for how well they are all working.

The committee discussed the need to have the right engagement between hubs and schools and that schools should be reaching out to their hubs as well.

It was agreed that this topic be revisited in Autumn 2013 as part of the work programme.

Preparing Young People for Employment Seminar

Cllr Waine presented a recommendation for the committee to consider:

"It is recommended that the council support Oxfordshire Skills Board to develop employability skills in young people whilst they are at school, by supporting a competition which will encourage young people to develop such skills. Winners could then showcase their winning talent to a younger audience at an event which provides a platform for local businesses to offer information and advice to all visitors about local jobs."

He suggested that as an upcoming activity the committee might visit a school in each of the 3 geographic areas, north, central and south and explore best practice in the

area of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) coursework as it relates to business needs

The need for a mechanism to ensure schools and businesses are better connected was highlighted.

The committee agreed to the recommendation and the visits to schools.

Education Update

Frances Craven (FC) joined for the final item on committee business. She updated on the Reading Campaign: 45 schools have signed up for the first round, 103 volunteers have come forward and volunteer trainer begins in January. The local press have been very positive and supportive of the campaign and have advertised it widely.

Twilight sessions are being held to get more schools involved and data from the latest Key Stage results is being reviewed to identify other schools who could benefit from the campaign.

Cllr Owen queried whether the volunteers are all CRB checked and whether they have to pay for this. FC explained that they are all checked, paid for by the schools.

Cllr Waive expressed the disappointment that early conversations about working in tandem with the city council had broken down and wondered what was being done to ensure this did not have a detrimental effect on the campaign.

FC assured the committee that they are working well with city council officers to minimise confusion around the two schemes.

Cllr Waive asked whether all targeted schools are taking part in the campaign and whether they are giving clear reasons if they are opting out.

FC explained that the responses are documented and will be analysed. The data can be provided to the committee. It is their understanding, particularly in the city, that all schools will engage with the programme.

Cllr Smith explained that whilst she had reservations over having competing schemes they seem to be working well together. However the picture is changing quickly and it is unclear what academies will decide to do.

The committee expressed appreciation to the officers and hoped that they keep up the good work.

FC reported that the Education Transformation Board has met twice and is expected to produce its first report after the third meeting.

FC gave a brief overview of the work of the board and the committee requested to know more about what the board can do.

CH3

The committee was joined by Vicky Field (VF), Mike Bardsley (MB) and Karen Hopwood (KH), HR Manager (Skills and Learning, Commissioning), who gave a presentation outlining the service.

There was a question around the types of education delivered by the service.

MB explained that they offer a variety of courses of different types.

- Workforce development
 - Vocational qualifications (NVQs), particularly in the areas of social care and early years.
- Community Learning
 - Such as keep fit, languages, arts and crafts
 - English and Maths skills
 - Family Learning
 - Working alongside schools to develop parents' learning to help them to help their children
- Short courses
 - Mostly at weekends to give a taste of a subject to encourage learners to take up longer courses.

Cllr Waine was interested in the family learning aspect and asked if there were links with the Early Intervention Hubs.

MB explained it is a growing picture and is dependent on the individual hub. They see linking with Hubs as a priority as more and more of their work is targeted towards particular groups. He indicated that the targeting criteria for Family Learning courses come from school data.

Cllr Fitzgerald-O'Connor had questions on the achievement of the Healthy Living award.

MB replied that they have been successful in gaining this award which recognises the good work they have been doing related to healthy living and which also required them to draw up an action plan to show how they could develop the work further.

Cllr Newton asked how the budget aligns to the different groups.

MB described the 2 general areas:

1. Adult skills budget £1.5M contract (19+ vocational courses, skills for life, ESOL)
2. £2.1M Community learning grant (not fixed to particular targets, covers community learning, supports centres and staff and family learning)

Sue Matthews (SM) asked whether non-targeted schools could get support and whether the courses are evaluated with attendance tracked.

MB replied that they only work in the areas where they are most needed. He explained that they have recently been complimented by Ofsted for their quality assurance. Every learner is contacted for feedback and any the reasons for leaving courses are recorded.

VF talked about a recent report by Daniel Fujiwara that places a monetary value on adult learning. It was agreed to make this available to the committee.

Concerns were raised over the unmet demand for ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) courses.

MB assured that the funding is targeted to those with most urgent need.

There was further discussion about the links with the Hubs and Children's Centres. KH described the work they do to get young people into employment, education or training which is funded by the Education Funding Agency (EFA).

The committee praised the work that is being done, particularly with apprenticeships. They welcomed the new addition to their portfolio and could see the clear links with the work the committee is already doing.

233/12 CABINET REPORT ON CHILDREN IN AND LEAVING CARE

(Agenda No. 8)

Matthew Edwards (ME), Corporate Parenting Manager, Jim Leivers (JL), Director for Children Education and Families, and Teresa Rogers (TR), Service Manager for Fostering, joined the committee to discuss the report.

Cllr Waine highlighted that the committee felt strongly that reports going to cabinet should come first to scrutiny as the committee comments as they have the opportunity to add value to the report. JL welcomed the chance to bring the report to scrutiny.

ME gave a brief overview of the report, highlighting the overall good performance and the outstanding areas. Particularly impressive are the good and outstanding ratings of Thornbury House and Maltfield House children's homes, especially as Ofsted are tightening their standards.

The committee praised the report and thanked the team for the work that has produced such good results.

There followed an in-depth discussion of the report, particularly focussing on how pressures on funding will be mitigated to continue to provide a good service. JL stressed that the decision around when to take children into care is not based on money, that they try and keep children in their families where possible and that they were all committed to making the right decisions.

They discussed the upcoming government changes making the adoption process quicker and how OCC are recruiting more foster families through targeted media campaigns.

..... There was also a discussion about how to manage the transition for children leaving care. ME explained that young people have a pathway plan which helps all of the professionals to understand how to manage the transition. There is also support for young people to catch up later on with qualifications that they may have missed the first time round.

Cllr Waine shared some Ofsted data indicating that one to one tuition greatly improves the educational attainment of looked after children up to and over that of their peers. He recommended that all schools are made aware and encouraged to spend their pupil premiums on this level of support.

234/12 LINK MATERNITY SERVICES PROJECT

(Agenda No. 9)

The committee were joined by Adrian Chant (AC) and Alison Partridge (AP).

AC gave an overview of the history and formation of LINK and summarised the current Maternity Services Project. The report will go into the maternity services commissioning process and can be brought to the next full scrutiny committee in February.

AP explained the transition from LINK to Healthwatch. The change will mean that it now includes Children's Social Care, encompassing the birth to death responsibility.

Cllr Handley asked about the funding for HealthWatch.

AP explained that there is a procurement process and there is unconfirmed central government funding which is not ring-fenced.

Sue Matthew gave particular praise to the breastfeeding service in the county but stressed that they need to get into Children's Centres. She also praised the work of the Youth Parliament in gathering children's views and welcomed the involvement of Youth Parliament in HealthWatch.

235/12 CLOSE OF MEETING

(Agenda No. 10)

The meeting finished at 13:00.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing